

some of its possibilities and its problems, was not without its influence on their reaction to the changes that met them when they got home again to Grosvenor Road, above all, their reaction to the two most important of these changes. They were of very differing kinds. If the one that most people completely disregarded at the time is put first, the reason is that it was a constructive event: the initial steps had been taken towards the formation of an independent Labour Party. Who caied? when the Balfour Government was plainly drifting into war with the South African Republics. At the time, of course, to the vast majority of British citizens, this second event entirely overshadowed the first: indeed, few were those, outside the professional political ranks, who were so much as aware that it had in fact taken place, or would have cared, if they had been aware. It is, however, a little surprising to find the Webbs apparently agreeing with the general public in this view. For the event which the press and the public disregarded and barely observed represented the precise achievement the Fabians had forecast, and struggled to bring about, in the days when Sidney Webb had been the guiding spirit in their counsels. In 1890 and 1891, as has already been noted, the Fabians, and above all, he and Bernard Shaw, were busy gingering up the Radical Clubs, and forcing a programme of constructive action upon the Liberal Party. The Newcastle Programme of 1891 was to a large extent the outcome

of their efforts The Liberal hierarchy, however,
remained
unmoved and apparently immovable So, when
a General
Election came in June 1892, the Manifesto
put out by
the Fabians was a blunt declaration of
disgust It tells
the workers, straight, that unless and until
they form
a Party of their own—which they could easily
do, if they
cared as much about politics as they did
about horse-
racing—they have nothing whatever to look
forward to